

West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
Howes House
December 13, 2016

Attendance

Committee: Katherine Triantafillou – Chair, Gary Montrowl – Vice Chair, Chuck Hodgkinson, Doug Ruskin, Greg Orcutt

Guests: Bruce Stone – Town Accountant, Skip Manter – Selectman, Tara Whiting – Town Clerk

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:32pm. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings

Greg moved to approve the November 15, 2016 minutes as submitted. Gary seconded the motion which passed 3-0-2 with Chuck (not in attendance on November 15, 2016) and Doug abstaining.

Old Business

Town Web Page

Tara explained the town website was created 15 years ago and when people request changes, Tara forwards those to another individual. Tara explained that minutes, agendas and other postings are not on the town website, but on mytowngovernment.org. Tara said the box outside of Town Hall fulfills the open meeting law requirement providing 24/7 access, but mytowngovernment.org is also a way to provide that access. Tara added there is no cost to the Town for using mytowngovernment.org.

Tara said that she along with Bruce, Kathy, and Jen are looking at ways to update the town website. She explained they have looked at similar sized towns where websites won awards. Tara also said that Bruce has been looking into grant opportunities.

Tara said the public records laws are changing and she now is a public records officer.

The Chair asked if the budget and annual report are posted online. Tara responded yes. The Chair asked how soon before annual meeting the budget is posted. Bruce responded that almost anything anybody wants to put on the website can be done instantaneously. Bruce added that until the warrant is signed off by the Selectmen, it is not posted.

Bruce explained that meetings and minutes are posted at an outside website by someone who originally set it up for Barry, MA, adding it is not the West Tisbury town website and not hosted by us.

Doug asked if the home page and Fin Com page is on the West Tisbury town website. Bruce responded yes. Bruce explained he posts the audit and budget adding that in order for something to be posted, it takes initiation from the department.

Bruce explained that even if grants for the website are not obtained, they are looking at what changes should be made. Bruce noted that to depend on the good nature of a volunteer to keep mytowngovernment.org running is not a great best practice.

Gary said that since the Fin Com uses the newspapers to get the message out, it would be nice to have the articles listed on our site. The Chair asked where the Fin Com should post the schedule for budget hearings. Tara responded the best spot is the home page.

Greg asked Bruce if he knew what kind of traffic the Fin Com page received. Bruce said he could track it, but has not checked lately. Gary asked how often website content is assessed and what should be on the front page. Bruce responded there are usually get five or six requests a month and they are posted within a couple of days. Tara added that big housekeeping changes are probably made every three months.

Bruce said we lost some functionality when we began listing agendas and minutes on mytowngovernment.gov. For example, there is no longer the ability to search.

Doug said that he thinks the budget line for IT needs to be robust enough to support this, adding that he has asked the Selectmen to assess all of the websites for town departments. Doug said his concern is that there is no ability to push out a communication to every voter that wants one, adding there is a lot of information the Fin Com would like to share with people ahead of town meeting. Tara responded that links can be set up for any documents the Fin Com would like voters to be able to see.

Chuck said that although he's not pushing for a virtual town hall, he set one up nine years ago for Chilmark. Chuck said there are several features including one in which news, announcements, agendas and minutes go to everyone who subscribes. Chuck added there is a calendar where Island wide meetings are posted. Chuck said the virtual town hall is functional, but the Chilmark platform is old. There have been updates that are more user friendly.

The Chair asked where bylaws could be found. Tara replied that on the left hand page there is a link for the bylaws. The Chair asked if there is a way to be able to search them more easily. Bruce responded that ties into what we'd like to be able to do. Bruce said he expected to have an update by the end of January. Greg said he would like to see metrics.

Budget and Warrant Review Process/Schedule

The Chair said that Margo summarized last year's schedule and proposed the first meeting be on January 3, 2017 to review the budget books. It was decided that Margo would check room availability and circulate a schedule to the Committee.

Finance Committee Budget

The Chair asked Doug if he had an estimate for the cost of a mailing to voters. Doug said the cost would be approximately \$2,000; no one on the committee was enthusiastic about spending that amount of money for a mailing.

Bruce suggested increasing hours for Margo to 125 hours in FY18.

Greg moved to increase Margo's hours to 125 hours for FY18. Gary seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The Chair said she would submit the Finance Committee Budget as revised.

Finance Committee Priorities/Goals

The Chair asked if there anything new to report on the Personnel Board. Doug said that he sent a follow up letter regarding the COLA adjustment. Doug said he received a thank you note from Maria MacFarland and didn't expect to receive anything from the Personnel Board regarding step increases.

The Chair asked if there were any other issues with the Personnel Board that required follow up. Doug responded the issue of elected official salaries. Doug said that he had a list of all elected officials and salaries and he would like to formally bring to the attention of voters at town meeting that there is no review process for elected officials.

The Chair noted that Doug said the Personnel Board would get back to him about the COLA calculation. Doug responded that nobody formally agreed to do that, but he told the Personnel Board that is the expectation. The Chair suggested Doug send the PB an email asking them to make sure they follow up with that information.

Gary asked Skip about the transfer of an elected position to appointed position. Skip said he believes it takes two votes including one at town meeting and one by the ballot. Gary asked in terms of timing, at what point would it be appropriate for the Fin Com to send a letter to the Selectmen regarding the transition. Greg suggested waiting until someone starts to speak about when they are going to retire.

The Chair noted the Finance Committee has discussed this in the past and suggested Doug make a presentation at the next meeting regarding this.

Gary asked about sequencing, stating he understands the need to be empathetic, but asked how long we can hold off on this without running the risk that another person runs for that office. The Chair said the Committee should hold off until Doug makes a presentation.

The Chair updated the Committee on an OPEB issue explaining that Margo, as an employee of the Finance Committee, will perform an analysis for the MVRHS at Mark Friedman's request.

Gary updated the Committee on School Choice stating it is done. Greg said that Skip made a presentation to the UIRSD on October 28, 2016. Greg explained that Skip presented that the UIRSD receives \$5,000/student which is divided amongst the towns. Of that, West Tisbury receives \$3,794/student and pays \$3,842/student to the Superintendent's Shared Services. That is a deficit of \$48/student which results in a cost of \$2,500/year for West Tisbury to participate in School Choice.

Gary asked why these numbers were only going out now. Gary asked how to move forward and if the UIRSD would amend the agreement. Doug suggested the Fin Com demand another meeting with the UIRSD and the All Island School Committee and they revote School Choice for FY19. Gary asked how realistic it is to expect a response.

Chuck asked if the AISC had to vote on a change to School Choice. Skip said if you wanted to ask the AISC to change the Superintendent's Shared Services budget, it would be during their meeting in October. Skip continued that the nine year plan came from the UIRSD so the AISC just agreed to the UIRSD recommendation. Based on that, Gary stated that the Fin Com has to persuade its own school committee first.

Doug explained that he is on a formula committee with Susan Silk and the committee has come up with four or five ways to allocate costs amongst the towns. Doug said he hopes the committee will have a presentation to the Selectmen by the end of December.

Bruce said that he has been appointed to a committee from the three towns and asked how that correlates with the other committee. The Chair explained Doug was appointed by the Selectmen to a WT Committee to determine UIRSD Allocation Formula. Bruce said the Selectmen appointed him to be part of a committee with Selectmen and other town accountants on a Chilmark committee.

Doug said that as a whole, there is no financial person at a high level from an analytic and planning perspective. Doug said he would like to meet with the Superintendent one on one and have that discussion. Gary asked if Doug was talking about a CFO position. Skip said he thought the informal All Island Finance Committee would be a great way to do that.

Chuck said this was one of the points that were listed in the letter sent by the Fin Com to the Superintendent and suggested a follow up letter. The Chair suggested reviewing the letter. Chuck said to justify the position, we'd have to identify where we think the position would save money.

New Business

MVC Budget

Doug said he received the MVC budget and met with Adam Turner who will provide the Fin Com with any information it would like. Doug explained he does not have an issue with the budget as it stands, adding that although it is up a small amount, much of that is an increase in healthcare. Doug said his only suggestion would be the MVC set up a reserve fund because they have capital expenses.

Gary recommended the Fin Com review the MVC budget as part of the budget book review process. Chuck said his issue was there were no actual expenditures, but when requested, Adam provided actuals. Chuck also said that he asked Adam about OPEB and Adam explained the MVC only has a few people in retirement. The Committee agreed OPEB was a topic to follow up with the MVC.

Committee Reports

CPC

Gary reported there are eight projects under consideration. One project is phase two of the recreational space at the school, resurfacing of the basketball court and the restoration of the soccer field. Gary said the request is \$10,000 from the WT CPC.

Gary reported the second project is the change in materials for the MV Museum Roof Restoration of the Marine Hospital. Gary explained the CPC has already voted on and allocated funds to the project and the material has been changed to cedar from slate.

Gary said the third project is the Mayhew Peddler's Wagon. The Museum would like to restore it and display it as an exhibit and is requesting \$50,000 from WT CPC. Chuck asked if the exhibit will be free for the general public to see it which is required in order to be eligible for CPA funds. Greg answered that currently it is on the grounds and can be seen for free. Gary said he would ask about that at the next CPC meeting. Skip questioned why the MV Museum is asking West Tisbury to fund the entire project which will reside at the Island museum.

Gary reported the next project is Scott's Grove. Gary explained that this is a new request for \$500,000 from West Tisbury and in order to preserve West Tisbury preference, the other towns are not being asked to contribute. Chuck pointed out after the Fin Com meeting on October 10, 2016, IHT sent a letter dated October 11, 2016 and addressed to the Chairman of Selectmen which said it will abide by the terms outlined in its RFP response dated June 29, 2016 and does not list additional CPA funds as a source of funding. Chuck further explained that in the letter, IHT lists a letter of interest from Edgartown National Bank for a \$750,000 construction loan and a \$550,000 permanent mortgage. Chuck stated that it appears IHT is changing terms again.

Gary said he would bring this up to the CPC. Gary added that if we receive state funding as part of a grant, 10% of the units (one) would be set aside for extremely low income individuals defined as people in jeopardy of being homeless. Gary said they are considering a cognitively impaired group for a two or three bedroom unit.

Gary said Keuhn's Way is another project being considered that is currently undergoing legal issues.

Gary said the Vineyard Baseball League is requesting \$65,000 from West Tisbury CPC for baseball field restoration. Gary explained this is an expansion to accommodate handicapped people and the West Tisbury share is \$65,000 of the \$75,000 project. Gary explained that after renovating bathrooms in 2016 with \$100,000 from Edgartown CPC, they need to add handicapped pathways and landscape certain areas.

Greg said the high school gave the MV Sharks the land and the MV Sharks were supposed to provide the facility. Greg continued the baseball field was viewed as a positive because there was no cost back to the community. Greg asked why the towns are now being asked to pay for the facility. Gary said that it is still used by a large portion of the community. The Chair suggested Gary ask about the history.

Chuck asked if the high school, Babe Ruth league, little league, mens leagues or the Sharks pay anything to use the field.

Skip said he is concerned about how projects decide which town to ask for money. Skip continued that to ask one town for funding – whether it's the MV Museum with the Peddler's Wagon or this - doesn't make sense. Skip suggested using a proportionate formula.

Gary said the next project is the DCRHA rental assistance program. Chuck asked if the amount is for West Tisbury tenants only. Doug responded yes.

Doug said he was at the third housing production plan meeting yesterday at which the consultants presented multiple proposals including one for the towns to commit 80% of CPA funds for the next five years to alleviate the housing crisis.

MVC

See under New Business – MVC Budget.

Schools – MVRHS

Chuck said he believes the union contracts granted a 3% COLA each year for three years. The Chair pointed out that the Fin Com was invited to the meeting at the last minute. Chuck said it reinforces the need for a formula. Chuck also said the Superintendent has a fund that he increased 2.6% for the

administrative pool because raises are not budgeted for the pool. Chuck stressed that next year the Fin Com should focus on COLA and a formula. The Chair agreed there is a need for uniformity of COLA.

Bruce said the schools don't have COLA, but have new three year contracts with a wage scale which is determined through a collective bargaining agreement.

Chuck reported the MVRHS budget is certified. The Chair suggested that those on the Schools Subcommittee drill down on the budget to see if there are specific recommendations the Fin Com should make.

Schools - UIRSD

Greg reported the budget is not yet done because the committee is being very diligent. Greg said that for the past few years, the UIRSD has increased OPEB by \$50k/year and one item discussed is to make the \$50,000 annual increase a warrant article so it is built into the budget each year. Skip said he believed there will be a warrant article for the greater OPEB amount first year and thereafter it will be transferred to line 311 so the spike is understood by voters.

The Chair asked about repairs and capital improvements. Greg responded there are repairs to the alarm, the doors and the roof which is about \$200,000 - \$300,000 short from the \$1,000,000 bond last year. Skip said contingencies, design fees and OPM were not included in the original bond.

Chuck said there may be a warrant article request of \$1.0 million to do a feasibility study for the MVRHS and currently they are only looking to repair things that affect student and staff health and safety which totals \$150,000 in FY18.

Correspondence/Scheduling

The Chair shared a bill from Pam Thors for two hours for minutes she took for the All Island Finance Committee meeting. *Greg moved to approve the bill as submitted. Gary seconded the motion which passed unanimously.*

The Chair urged Committee members to be careful with email communication as certain types of emails might be construed as a "meeting" and thus violative of the open meeting law. The chair reiterated the difference between sending out information to members and requesting opinions from two or more people. Gary noted the way this has come up is that we are trying to provide feedback from a meeting. Gary continued that the Committee needs to be flexible about its time such that additional meetings can be scheduled if something important needs to be discussed. The Chair concurred that if there is urgency about an issue, an additional meeting can be scheduled. The Chair added that frequently in person conversations are more productive for the Committee than email especially when trying to understand another member's position on an issue.

Chuck said last summer Bruce discovered the 50/50 formula had an error. Bruce said that West Tisbury paid its assessment based on the correct formula.

The Chair said that she and Margo will look at a schedule for budget and warrant hearings. Bruce confirmed that he expected to have budget books ready before the meeting scheduled on January 3, 2017.

Bruce announced the Personnel Board approved a 2.0% wage scale adjustment yesterday. Bruce also announced the Island tax levy for FY17 – the amount raised by property taxes island wide - will exceed \$100 million.

The next Finance Committee meeting is Tuesday, January 3, 2017 at 4:30pm.

Adjournment

Greg moved to adjourn. Chuck seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Margo Urbany-Joyce, Administrative Assistant

Approved: 5-0

Date: 1/3/17